Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixty-seventh session

Summary record of the 1515th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 12 July 2017, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Leinarte

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Combined fifth to eighth periodic reports of Barbados (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

Combined fifth to eighth periodic reports of Barbados (*continued*)
(CEDAW/C/BRB/5-8; CEDAW/C/BRB/Q/5-8 and Add.1)

Articles 10 to 14 (*continued*)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Barbados took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr.** Jeffrey **Kellman** (Barbados) said that the Constitution had been amended to make the transfer of citizenship gender-neutral. The foreign spouses of both Barbadian men and women were now able to obtain citizenship following a period of cohabitation. Moreover, children born outside Barbados to Barbadian-born parents in or out of wedlock after Barbadian independence were now automatically citizens of Barbados. Persons born outside Barbados to Barbadian parents prior to independence could also receive citizenship, but the amendment did not address persons born prior to independence who were born out of wedlock to Barbadian fathers or to Barbadian women married to foreign men. In addition, under the Citizenship Act, non-Barbadian children adopted by families where the adoptive father was a Barbadian national became Barbadian citizens upon the date of issue of the adoption order.

3. **Mr.** Ricardo **Kellman** (Barbados) said that the Government was carefully considering the legal ramifications of acceding to the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

4. **Ms. Boyce** (Barbados) said that rate of mother-to-child transmission of HIV was close to zero per cent owing to free access to antiretroviral medication. Pregnant women were offered HIV tests and were duly treated to prevent transmission. The National HIV/AIDS Commission worked with men who had sex with men, people with HIV/AIDS and sex workers. A study on the experiences of people engaged in transactional sex work in Barbados had been undertaken by an NGO, which had also provided training and assistance for sex workers wishing to find alternative employment. Under the National HIV/AIDS Commission, the Bureau of Gender Affairs worked to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS, including through presentations at youth camps. Student nurses at Barbados Community College had received training on those topics as well as on how to treat persons with HIV/AIDS.

5. **Ms. Verges** commended the State party for its Urban Enterprise Programme, which had benefited women, and noted the social and financial protection mechanism under which persons earning less than 16,000 Barbados dollars per year could obtain up to BDS$ 1,300 of credit. She wished to know how that mechanism worked, whether it only covered women living in urban areas and whether it provided sustainable social protection. She asked what measures had been taken to ensure equal access to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit and eliminate discrimination in that area. Similarly, she would appreciate information on policies to encourage women to apply for loans.

6. Noting that only some 40 per cent of the 146 requests for small business status in the period 2000-2007 were approved, she asked why the number of requests had been so low and whether there was insufficient political will to encourage small businesses. In addition, she would appreciate further information on policies to strengthen capacity-building among female entrepreneurs. Lastly, she would appreciate further information on women's participation in social and cultural life, including national sporting events. She asked what measures had been undertaken in that area, particularly to increase the number of women in sports.

7. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said she wished to know how the work of the Rural Development Commission to improve the participation of rural women in economic and social activity had been carried out and how different bodies had coordinated their activities to ensure that gender was taken into account in forestry and fishing. She would also be grateful for information on the cultural obstacles to women becoming landowners.

8. In addition, as many women performed unpaid agricultural or household work, she asked how the State party was helping to ensure that such work was recognized as having economic value and deserving remuneration. She also wished to know how poverty alleviation programmes had affected women's empowerment and how many women were benefiting from poverty alleviation schemes. She asked what measures and programmes had been adopted to include women in sustainable development strategies. She also wished to know how women were being helped to face the challenges of climate change and mitigate its impact.

9. She would welcome disaggregated data on anti-discrimination initiatives and information on the life expectancy, level of education and economic participation of women with disabilities in comparison to men with disabilities and the general population. It would also be helpful to have further information on the situation of female migrants and asylum seekers in Barbados and their access to health care, education and social assistance.

10. Given that the Human Rights Committee had expressed concerns in 2007 about the criminalization of sexual activity between adults of the same gender, she asked where the review of legislation on sexual crimes currently stood and whether such provisions of the law had prevented lesbian, bisexual and transgender women from having access to health care. She asked what measures had been undertaken to protect those women from discrimination and what obstacles prevented progress in decriminalizing consensual sexual activity between adults of the same gender.

11. **Ms. Ameline** said that Barbados could serve as a regional model for sustainable development, for example in the area of clean energy. The Sustainable Development Goals had provided a new paradigm of the rule of law and gender equality. In the light of those Goals, she wished to know what measures the Government was taking to ensure that women were not only the beneficiaries of development policies but also agents of change. She asked how the Government planned to adjust existing sustainable development programmes to meet those Goals and what role women would play in sustainable development at the national and regional levels.

12. **Ms. Boyce** (Barbados) said that a new policy would help to promote the activities of female entrepreneurs and small business owners. Her delegation would provide further details of the policy in writing, in addition to statistics on persons with disabilities and female life expectancy. The Government had participated in various conferences to learn about the challenges and successes of other States in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and was considering establishing a committee to manage implementation of the Goals. All persons requiring medical attention received the necessary treatment regardless of how they identified themselves. As such, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons were entitled to the same care as all other citizens.

13. **Mr. Gibbs** (Barbados) said that the Government had promoted gender equality through its sustainable development agenda. Progress in that area would build on the country's efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and its long-standing commitment to social inclusion and welfare. Women had been instrumental in developing social policy and the concept of sustainable development.

14. **Mr.** Ricardo **Kellman** (Barbados) said that, in order to empower women economically and strengthen social services, the Government was working to enact new legislation and provide training and practical skills to women. The National Policy on Gender reflected the country's commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals relating to women. Lastly, the National Sports Council provided many inclusive sports programmes and activities for both boys and girls.

Articles 15 and 16

15. **Ms. Song**, commending the State party's efforts concerning equality in marital and family relations, said that women were no longer required by law to take their husband's surname upon marriage, according to the State party's report. She thus wished to know whether women throughout the country had been informed of that right. In view of a large number of reports in recent years of girls running away from home, she asked whether the

Government had looked into the reasons why girls did so, how such cases were handled and what support was given to the girls and their families. Although the Government would seek to abolish corporal punishment in schools, she wished to know why the Government did not seek a similar prohibition in the home and what the major barriers to such a policy were.

16. Given that the country was prone to natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes, and women and children were often the most affected by such events, a gender-sensitive strategy in disaster management and recovery was required. Nevertheless, she was concerned that a gender-based approach had not been explicitly incorporated into natural disaster strategies. Commending the fact that women held leadership positions in various disaster management departments, she wondered whether there were training programmes for emergency workers to raise their awareness about gender issues, the gender impact of natural disasters and the needs of women living in affected areas. She also asked whether there was a mechanism through which women's voices could be heard concerning the impact of natural disasters and if local women were actively engaged in recovery efforts.

17. **Mr. Blackett** (Barbados) said that there was no real consensus with regard to the use of corporal punishment in the country. Although the Ministry of Education had decided to move away from the practice, and it had become less common in recent times, corporal punishment was still generally accepted by Barbadian society, particularly among the older generations.

18. **Mr.** Ricardo **Kellman** (Barbados) said that the Government sought to raise awareness of other methods of discipline and dispute resolution between children and adults, in an attempt to change the culture and attitudes surrounding corporal punishment. There was also a two-month re-education programme aimed at persons who had been identified as domestic abusers on how to discipline children without recourse to violence.

19. The Department of Emergency Management developed, promoted and maintained a comprehensive disaster management programme, which educated citizens about all aspects of disaster management. Gender was one of a number of factors that were taken into account when responding to natural disasters. Local branches of the Department gave training to volunteers on how to provide specific assistance to women and vulnerable groups in disaster situations.

20. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that although corporal punishment had been, and continued to be, a widespread practice, its negative effects were well documented, and alternative methods of discipline should be considered. Furthermore, drawing a distinction between the use of corporal punishment in public settings, namely schools, and private settings, such as the home, served to reinforce the idea that violence was permissible as long as it was not publicly seen.

21. **Ms. Boyce** (Barbados) said that the use of excessive discipline was not permitted under Barbadian law. The Child Care Board was responsible for investigating cases of alleged abuse, and the Probation Department was competent to deal with cases of family violence. Paredos, a local NGO, provided training for young parents in areas such as conflict resolution.

22. No research had yet been conducted on the issue of runaway girls, and no awareness-raising measures had yet been taken by the Government concerning the right of women to keep their own name after marriage, since the amendment had been introduced very recently.

23. **Ms. Song** said that research had shown that persons who had received corporal punishment as children were more likely to be perpetrators of violence later in life. She wished to know whether there were any plans to address the fact that, although the minimum age for marriage was 18 by law, girls could marry as early as 16 years of age with their parents' consent.

24. **Ms. Boyce** (Barbados) said that, even though girls could marry at 16 or 17 with the consent of their parents, such early marriages did not occur in practice.

25. **Mr.** Ricardo **Kellman** (Barbados) said that the issue concerning early marriage had been raised by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and a review of the relevant laws was currently under way by a legal consultant to explore ways of bringing the minimum legal age for marriage into conformity with the recommendations of the Committee.

26. **Mr. Blackett** (Barbados) said that his delegation was grateful for the useful comments and recommendations made by the Committee, and his Government would do everything possible to act on them within the constraints of the budget and human resources available.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.